

Medway Council
Meeting of Regeneration, Community and Culture
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 16 August 2012

6.34pm to 10.00pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

- Present:** Councillors: Bright (Chairman), Griffiths, Adrian Gulvin, Hicks, Juby, Mackinlay, Maisey and Stamp
- Substitutes:** Councillor Avey for Councillor Griffin
Councillor Pat Gulvin for Councillor Turpin
Councillor Kemp for Councillor Etheridge
Councillor Maple for Councillor Hubbard
- In Attendance:** Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration, Community & Culture
Tim England, Head of Safer Communities
Anthony Law, Democratic Services Officer
Anna Marie Lawrence-Lovell, Performance Manager
Brian McCutcheon, Planning Policy and Design Manager
Andy McGrath, Assistant Director, Front Line Services
Caroline Salisbury, Democratic Services Officer

1 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting on 28 June 2012 was agreed and signed as correct by the Chairman.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Etheridge, Griffin, Harriott, Hubbard and Turpin.

3 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

4 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests

Councillor Stamp declared two declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest which were registered with Medway Council, with reference to agenda item 7 (Water supply in Medway) as he works for the Environment Agency and with reference to agenda item 8 (Report from in-depth task group on "Fair Access to Credit") as his partner is the Chief Executive of Medway Citizens Advice

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Bureau, which was referred to in the review. As the committee was a non-decision making committee he would remain for both items.

Councillor Griffiths declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest if there was any reference to Medway Community Healthcare, as he is a non-executive Director. He also declared that that he is a member of the Medway Credit Union, which is referred to in agenda item 8 (Report from in-depth task group on "Fair Access to Credit").

Councillor Avey declared that he is a member of the Medway Credit Union, which is referred to in agenda item 8 (Report from in-depth task group on "Fair Access to Credit").

Councillor Mackinlay declared, with reference to agenda item 6 (Member's Item: extension to the Chatham Alcohol Control Zone), that he is a prospective candidate for the role of Police and Crime Commissioner in Kent.

Councillor Maple declared that he is a member of Medway Credit Union and Kent Savers, which are referred to in agenda item 8 (Report from in-depth task group on "Fair Access to Credit").

5 Attendance of Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services

Discussion:

The Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, addressed the committee outlining the main achievements within areas of his portfolio, including:

- Safe roads in Medway – although the national figures for people killed and seriously injured (KSI) on roads over the past 10 years was increasing, Medway continued to see a steady reduction in these numbers, helped by a small team of officers who worked extremely hard on road safety schemes, improving cycle ways, road markings and speed limits.

This team also now managed all school crossing patrols.

The walking bus scheme currently operated at 45 schools with about 850 children participating.

- Highways – many road and pavement re-surfacing schemes were to take place in the next three months (as detailed in the supplementary agenda), which should help to see resident satisfaction figures (to be discussed later on the agenda) improve. Medway was currently undergoing several long-term works by statutory undertakers (water, gas, broadband, etc.) and this was probably reflected in the recent figures. The council had coped well with the bad winter weather on the roads and the supply of salt had been increased and had lasted throughout the winter. A recent problem had been flash flooding and gulleys becoming blocked. The council had a programme

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of works to clean them but some required more attention than others and, at times, this was more of a re-active service to reports of blockage.

- Medway Tunnel - a new fibre optic network had been installed through the tunnel to the CCTV unit at the council.
- Parking services – the CCTV enforcement car continued to visit schools in Medway to make the area surrounding the school safe for children as they started and finished their school day. Despite adverse publicity, there were more requests from residents for the CCTV car to attend a location than complaints received.

A programme to power pay and display machines by solar energy had been on-going throughout the past year and 90% of machines now operated by solar power.

The service was looking to introduce an online permit application facility, which would also make renewal of permits easier for residents.

- Integrated transport – Chatham waterfront bus station had opened and usage had increased from 8.4 million journeys to 9.5 million journeys during 2011-2012 throughout Medway.

The 'Bikeability' scheme continued and work on cycle routes was on-going.

- Concessionary bus travel – the council had written to over 40,000 residents notifying them that their concessionary pass was due for renewal at the end of March 2013.
- Waste - resident satisfaction with the various waste services currently stood at: waste collection – 92.75%, recycling – 84%, graffiti removal – 76% and street cleaning – 74%.

The council continually considered new ways to increase the recycling rate together with different ways to recycle. Officers were waiting the outcome of a bid to government to introduce a weekly recycling collection service.

Members asked:

- whether the quality of the blue bags could be improved, as they did not seem strong and the handles broke?

The Portfolio Holder advised that new bags had been sourced which were made of stronger materials that did not seem to deteriorate.

- whether the value of recycling materials was reduced if it was contaminated with garden waste? This had been asked because operatives had been seen using the garden bin to transport recycled waste to the collection vehicle.

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Councillor Filmer advised that he would look into this, as he did not think this should happen.

- the Portfolio Holder to ensure that officers monitored the quality of re-instatement materials used by the utility companies when they replaced roads and pavements, to ensure that it was of high quality and would not deteriorate quickly. He was also asked what evidence the council had that re-instatement works were of sufficiently high quality to withstand future bad winter weather and if the council instructed the companies to replace any poor quality materials, otherwise it would have to pay for unnecessary works in the future with monies that could have been used elsewhere.

Members also asked the Portfolio Holder to ensure that, in the future, the council's own re-instatement works were to a high standard in order to set an example as this had not been the case for works around Gillingham Railway Station.

The Portfolio Holder advised that more monitoring was being carried out than previously and core samples were taken to check the compatibility with existing materials. This was carried out to a national standard and there was now better liaison between the council and the utility companies that were notified to replace their re-instatement work when necessary. He added that public perception about replacement materials was understandable, as no matter how high the quality of replacement materials; it took a number of years for it to look the same as the surrounding area and not like a patchwork.

- could the Portfolio Holder arrange a Member's visit to the Traffic Management Centre?

Councillor Filmer advised that he would arrange this visit.

- whether the road safety team monitored traffic lights and the number of cars that continued to drive through a red light? This matter had been raised, as more incidences of this seemed to be happening on a more regular basis around Medway.

Councillor Filmer advised that he would discuss this with the Assistant Director of Front Line Services.

- if the council could promote residents concerns to the relevant train companies about the recent announcement of increases to fares?

The Portfolio Holder advised that he had already sent letters to South East Trains and the Transport Secretary about this matter and had also asked to look at the formula used to set the increase, as it added approximately £200 on the annual fare to London, at a time when wages were not increasing.

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- if the Portfolio Holder, together with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, monitored the impact of car parking charges on the local economy to understand its impact during difficult trading circumstances? Was there any evidence that people were using the free superstores and centres instead?

Councillor Filmer confirmed that he did monitor car park charges, comparing them to other Local Authorities but advised that Medway could not compete with out of town retail outlets such as Bluewater and Hempstead Valley as they provided free parking. The number of people continuing to use car parks in Medway demonstrated that the council was not over-charging for their use and many nearby authorities charged much higher prices.

- if the gulley cleaning programme had been partially responsible for the blockages that had happened during heavy rainfall? If so, was the Portfolio Holder looking to improve this and within what timescale?

The Portfolio Holder advised that all gulleys were cleaned annually and for most of them this was sufficient but a small number would need to be re-visited, as they required more care. Recently, each year's weather had been very different and flash flooding had been a specific problem for this year. Officers were currently looking at the gulleys that were known to have problems in order to make improvements and this work would be completed within the next six months.

- if the programme of pavement weed killing was still in operation, as there were several locations where this did not seem to happen?

The Portfolio Holder advised that this was still carried out two or three times a year and he would investigate the locations drawn to his attention.

- for confirmation of the legality of the CCTV enforcement car.

Councillor Filmer advised that the legality of the CCTV car had been challenged and tested at the Adjudication Tribunal, where it had been found to be totally legal.

- when would the council obtain software for vehicle licence plate recognition for use on the CCTV system?

Officers advised that the government would need to issue a legal 'statutory instrument' to allow this and, as this had not happened since 2004 when the legislation was enacted, and following a letter from Norman Baker MP, it was thought that it was unlikely to happen in the future.

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- if health visitors and carers could be given assistance with special parking permits to allow them to park closer to their clients houses during their working day?

The Portfolio Holder advised that he would investigate this further.

- how residents would be notified about the new on-line parking permit renewal facility?

Councillor Filmer advised that he would ask officers to liaise with the council's Communications team about how to take this forward and that this might include an article in the Medway Matters newsletter.

- the Portfolio Holder to investigate the provision of clear sacks in Gillingham. Additional money had been set-aside in the budget to provide these to residents every 12–13 weeks throughout the year. However, there had been a backlog of provision in Gillingham of up to 6–8 weeks and therefore the contractor had not provided as many as had been contracted for.

Councillor Filmer advised that he would investigate this.

- when signage in Area C at the Chatham waterfront bus station would be installed to the same quality as Areas A and B?

The Portfolio Holder advised that he would discuss this with officers.

- when would the Love Medway App have the facility to report pot holes?

Officers advised that the IT links between the council and the contractor were currently not compatible but that this would be in place by April 2013.

- if the Portfolio Holder had considered the use of smartphone or text for payment of car park charges, as other Local Authorities did? Another Member asked, if the new technology was not financially viable, perhaps consideration could be given to residents being able to use the 'Oyster card' system in Medway, as it was an existing technology and many residents who worked in London already used this scheme.

On behalf of the Portfolio Holder, the Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture advised that a pilot scheme might be trialled in a car park in Rochester but there was a cost element to the council for each transaction.

The Portfolio Holder advised that he would look into possible use of the 'Oyster card' in Medway.

- the Portfolio Holder to provide a list of schools the CCTV enforcement car had visited during the past year.

Councillor Filmer agreed to provide this information to the committee.

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- what statutory powers did the council have to ensure that road works were completed on time and could the companies be made to use more people in order that the works were completed as quickly as possible?

On behalf of the Portfolio Holder, the Assistant Director of Front Line Services advised that there were standard powers under the Traffic Management Act and that the council did hold discussions with the utility companies which included the length of time for a project. The companies could be fined if they overran but this was not a significant amount of money. There was an option to introduce a permit scheme for road works and also a licensing scheme, which had to satisfy a higher level of permissions and if the company stepped outside of this, they could be heavily penalised but this seemed to currently only be available in certain areas of the country.

Decision:

The Committee thanked Councillor Filmer for attending the meeting and the information and answers he had provided.

6 Member's Item: extension to the Chatham Alcohol Control Zone

Discussion:

Councillor Osborne introduced the report by giving a power point presentation. He highlighted the main reasons for his proposal, which included:

- that it was important to listen to the community, which had asked for this extension to the Chatham Alcohol Control Zone (ACZ) and the presentation was being made with the support of the PACT Chairman and residents in the area
- anti-social behaviour problems in Luton were mainly concentrated around the old Luton area and Luton Road, which was where the extension was proposed
- the police.uk website had recorded all reports of anti-social behaviour in that area, which showed 60-70 cases per month during 2012. These were compared with incidents of anti-social behaviour in Rainham High Street, which showed a lower number of reports but was an area that had been identified for a possible ACZ
- the housing demographic and population in the proposed area was similar to those in the current ACZ
- the cost of extending the ACZ was minimal to the value it gained. There was no cost to the police, as they would not need to provide extra officers (there were already a number in the vicinity) but it would be an extra resource, if they wished to remove alcohol from a person in that area
- the community and residents would respond positively to this council and police engagement with their concerns, as there was evidence (through the PACT meetings) that anti-social behaviour was not being reported because there was no confidence that anything would be done.

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The committee discussed the proposal and response from the police in paragraph 3.16 of the report and some Members indicated that they believed the police had sufficient powers to act in cases of anti-social behaviour without the extension to the Alcohol Control Zone and that they would want the co-operation of the police, working in partnership with the council, on this issue. Councillor Osborne agreed that it was not a solution to the overall problem but was another method the police could use if they wanted to and re-emphasised that it engaged with the community's request, which was part of the Big Society agenda.

Decision:

The committee recognised the issues raised in the Luton area and requested officers to organise a meeting with Kent Police, Councillor Osborne and other Ward Members and the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Customer Contact to discuss a potential extension to the Chatham Alcohol Control Zone and to report back in due course.

7 Water supply in Medway

Discussion:

The Planning Policy and Design Manager introduced the report, which responded to a request made by the committee in April 2012. The committee was reminded of the extraordinary weather conditions that had been experienced since 2007, when a task group of the committee published a report on "The provision of water to meet Medway's future needs".

The committee was informed that some progress had been made since the publication of the review but there was more that could still be done. Southern Water was now actively engaged with stakeholders with regard to its future Water Resource Management Plan and officers were taking part in that consultation process. A Member of the committee added that he had also taken part in a recent engagement event. Members asked officers to investigate the future dates of Southern Water's stakeholder events due over the next three years and to inform the committee, in order that Members may attend, if they wished to.

Members thanked officers for the report setting out the current position, as they had wanted to be clear about this matter at a time when infrastructure was under stress and a very large urban development was underway. They wished to ensure there would be no problem for any residents in Medway and also that it would not jeopardise the economic development that was required in Medway, if there was to be future problems with the supply of water.

The committee asked if the planning system could be used to bring about greater use of water recycling schemes. Officers advised that, with the support of the Environment Agency, Medway had the most ambitious water resource target in the south east of England. With regard to 'grey water' re-use, under the Sustainable Urban Drainage systems, due to come into force in October

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2012, any two properties would have to have this type of system built in as the houses were developed and authorised by the Local Authority through the planning process.

Members also discussed water poverty, which was common for large families when water metering was universally installed, as was happening in Medway and requested officers to ensure that Southern Water considered this issue and developed proposals to tackle this, such as creating 'mixed tariffs'. Officers agreed to engage with Southern Water on this issue through the development of the Water Resource Management Plan.

Decision:

The committee agreed:

- (a) to note the report and request that officers continue to engage with Southern water over the company's next Water Resource Management Plan, including water poverty for larger families;
- (b) that OFWAT is informed of this review and the importance of ensuring that company resource plans have adequate headroom, reflecting local climatic conditions.

8 Report from in-depth task group on "Fair Access to Credit"

Discussion:

The Chairman of the Task Group, Councillor Hicks, gave a presentation setting out the context of the review and the main issues considered, together with the outcome of the review leading to the 29 recommendations. The main findings of the review were:

- The role of the Council in supporting Medway residents affected by unaffordable credit – work to enable credit unions, promote financial literacy and support the establishment of a Social Impact Board
- Strengthening the rules governing the issue of lending licences and, recognising that an effective strategy in combating illegal lending was an alternative supply, addressing the lack of affordable credit – included focus on giving local authorities greater control over the planning process and enabling affordable alternatives such as credit unions
- How the Council could promote financial literacy and affordable lending and debt counselling – recommendations to promote the integration of financial education in to the curriculum, financial literacy for all and promote the timely access to appropriate and quality advice.

A Member of the task group emphasised that this was currently a high profile national issue and that many other people across the country were also considering this review, such as newspapers, politicians and other Local

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Authorities, as it represented a substantial snapshot of the current situation. The recommendations would make a number of differences to residents across the whole of Medway, as this issue was not restricted to deprived wards but affected many people living in every ward. The creation of a Social Impact Board would seek to tackle some of the issues raised in the report, which effected people's general health and wellbeing.

The committee was advised that the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended that the term "support" in recommendation 9 was amended to "welcome the research being undertaken by Bristol University into caps on the total cost of credit".

Decision:

The Committee agreed:

- (a) to endorse and recommend the Fair Access to Credit review to Cabinet on 4 September 2012 for consideration, including recommendations 1 – 29 as set out in the report with the amendment to recommendation 9 as follows:

"That the Council *welcomes* the appointment of Bristol University's Personal Finance Research Centre to carry out research into the impact on consumers and business of a variable cap on the total cost of credit that can be charged in the short to medium term high cost credit market. The research is due to report in summer 2012 and it is recommended that the Council review and respond to the Government response to this research";

- (b) to thank all the officers who supported the Task Group during this review.

9 Council Plan performance monitoring 2012-2013 - Quarter 1

Discussion:

The Performance Manager introduced the report advising the committee that it was considering a new basket of measures for 2012/2013 and that the report allowed Members to monitor progress in achieving the outcomes set out in the Council Plan.

Members were advised that performance measures NI117, NI148 and NI185 were not relevant to this Committee but had been provided to give context and clarity of how the priorities as a whole had been performing.

The Committee was advised that the key highlights were:

- A new performance measure TRSM7 (number of notices for works on the Highway)
- £600,000 of EU funding secured to appoint a post employment support team as part of Employ Medway
- pilot arrangements for information sharing between partners on notifications of domestic abuse had begun

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- waste recycling levels had exceeded their target as was usual due to the seasonal patterns of recycling

Members were also advised that the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered this report on 8 August 2012 and had referred two matters of concern to this committee for further consideration. These were H14 (the average length of stay in B&B for households with dependent children and pregnant women) and F4 (user satisfaction with events). Officers advised that they would provide a Briefing Note giving more information about the number of people living in temporary accommodation and with regard to indicator F4, a Member's concerns about some arrangements for this year's FUSE Festival had been built into project planning for next year's festival. Overall there had been positive feedback from this year's festivals and events.

The committee considered the summary table at appendix 1 where ECD48c (Employment that has lasted 26 weeks) was shown with a red indicator. The Performance Manager advised that there was a time delay to the reporting of this statistic, as it would not be reported until after 26 weeks into the new financial year and Members would then be able to see the impact of performance. There were also statistics awaited for LRCC4 (number of jobs created and safeguarded) as these were reported one quarter in arrears. Members asked that the Portfolio Holder gave further information on these indicators when she attended the committee at the next meeting.

Following discussion on W5 (Satisfaction with how the Council deals with graffiti) officers advised that work was being undertaken to discover why perception was lower than expected when the number of reported incidents was dropping. Members responded that this might be due to graffiti viewed by commuters on railway land and officers confirmed that they had met representatives of Network Rail in order to try and find a way forward on this issue.

Members commented on the numbers quoted in the report in paragraphs 3.11 and 3.14 of the report (feedback scores of 100% and Love Medway Accounts increased by 125%) and requested that, in future, these were made quantifiable. For example, how did the council know it was achieving its targets with no information of what attendance was aimed for at each event. Were the events aimed at residents and/or visitors and if both, what were the targets. Also, how many Love Medway App accounts were opened during quarter 1 to achieve 125% increase?

With reference to performance indicator NI 167 (average journey time along 6 primary corridors into Chatham on page 131 of the agenda), a Member questioned the figures reported for quarter 1 as he was conscious of significant queuing at major roundabouts and suggested that there seemed to be a difference between reported performance and the actual situation. He added that the information for indicator IT2 (percentage of people who think Medway Council helps people travel easily around Medway on page 132 of the agenda) seemed to support his view. The Assistant Director of Front Line Services advised that this measure had been developed a number of years ago with

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regard to the trend analysis of six routes, which were based on where the police had Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras at that time, so they were not necessarily in the right place. The council now had a new urban management system with access to other areas of Medway, so could look into this further. Members requested that they were involved in the decision of which six routes would now be used for this performance indicator.

A Member asked that consideration was given to only producing the full set of A3 colour performance indicator information for the Cabinet report (which all members receive) and that overview and scrutiny Members are requested to bring that to the meeting with them when considering future Council Plan monitoring reports in order to cut down on the paper and postage costs.

Decision:

The committee agreed to:

- (a) note the first quarter performance against the Key Measures of Success used to monitor progress against the Council Plan 2012/2013;
- (b) request that officers provide further information on performance indicator H14 (the average length of stay in B&B for households with dependent children and pregnant women) via a Briefing Note;
- (c) request that officers review how key performance criteria is reported in the future, providing quantifiable information;
- (d) request that officers re-consider the routes used to report on NI 167 (average journey time along 6 primary corridors into Chatham) and that Members are involved in the decision-making process for the six routes chosen.

10 Work programme

Discussion:

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and advised Members of the proposed changes to the work programme, as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report. She also informed the committee of new items included on the Cabinet's Forward Plan that had been published earlier in the day. This included:

- Three reports to South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership – and advised that there was already a report due to be submitted to the committee giving an overall update on the work of this partnership
- Adoption of the Medway Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy - and advised that this was an indicative date and that she would update the committee on the timing of this report when available
- Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring report.

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The committee was also requested to consider the scheduling of reports on the current work programme in order that future agendas were not overloaded. Members were also offered a presentation on the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the scrutiny work of the Police and Crime Panel before elections were held on 15 November 2012 to appoint a Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent.

A Member requested that an additional report was added to the programme detailing the council's cultural activities programme, with particular information on the marketing and promotion of all types of cultural events. This was due to a number of events at theatres that had not been well attended and his concern that, in a time of budget pressures and savings being made, the budget was not reduced or withdrawn, as it was important to have a good cultural offer in order to attract new businesses and future residents to the area.

Decision:

The committee agreed to:

- (a) note the amendments and additions to the current work programme detailed in the report;
- (b) amend the current work programme as follows:
 - Housing Capital programme – deferred for consideration until 13 December 2012
 - Update on South Thames gateway Building Control partnership – deferred for consideration until 13 December 2012
 - Annual review of waste contracts: Year 2 – deferred until 31 January 2013.
- (c) add a report to the work programme on the council's cultural activities programme including information on the marketing and promotion of events.

Chairman

Date:

Caroline Salisbury, Democratic Services Officer

Telephone: 01634 332013

Email: democratic.services@medway.gov.uk